



ISSN Print: 2394-7500
ISSN Online: 2394-5869
Impact Factor: 8.4
IJAR 2021; 7(7): 204-206
www.allresearchjournal.com
Received: 29-04-2021
Accepted: 07-06-2021

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Sustainable Indian society for poverty empowerment

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Abstract

Poverty is relative but not absolute. The paper did an elaborate study on UN convention on the rights of The Child and feminization of poverty. The paper concentrates on the empowerment of below poverty line population through education, political representation and technology. The paper suggests to raise committed citizens to the society who are empowered to fulfill their dreams and also the national interests.

Keywords: Below poverty line, public provident fund, Indian railways

1. Introduction

Whenever a country cripples into economic depression, the major public issue that arises is poverty^[1]. A fundamental cause of poverty is the public attitudes about individual and social responsibility and for men's actions and its consequences^[1]. However, poverty is relative but not absolute^[1]. An income to provide 3500 calories a day is an ideal to be realized and only the well-to-do three-tenths of the human race get more than 2750 calories with a variety of diet, to maintain a healthy body in addition to satisfying hunger^[1]. An income so low that does not purchase enough food to allay hunger is called poverty^[1]. India needs heavy infrastructure investments-roads, power, ports, water and sanitation, telecommunications-for deepened domestic integration with world markets^[2]. India needs to invest more on education of lower castes and outcastes who faced extreme social exclusion^[2].

2. Literature survey

Empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives^[3]. Assets include land, housing, livestock, savings and jewelry-enable people to withstand shocks and expanded horizon of choice^[3]. Human capabilities include health, education, and production or life enhancing skills^[3]. Social capabilities viz. social belonging, leadership, relations of trust, a sense of identity, values to life and organizing capacity^[3]. Political capability to represent oneself or others, access information, form associations, and participation in a community life or that of a country^[3]. Empowerment approaches include – provision of basic services (health care, education, water, roads, and basic infrastructure), improved local governance, improved national governance, pro-poor market development, access by poor people to justice^[3]. Providing basic services include-information on government services and performance in the public domain (e-governance), to design mechanisms for inclusion and participation (planning, budgeting, rule-making and management), promoting social accountability (citizen monitoring) and local organizational capacity^[3]. Empowerment through-inclusion, voice and accountability-promote social cohesion and trust, qualities that reduce corruption, provide a conducive environment for reform and economic growth^[3]. The influencing conditions of Empowerment are-the nature of public action, patterns of social exclusion and conflict, the extent of decentralization, the strength of local level institutions and civil society, the extent of political freedom^[3]. Women are poorer than men because they are often denied equal rights and opportunities, lack access to assets, and do not have same entitlements as men^[4]. They also carry the burden of reproductive and care work and represent the majority of unpaid labour^[4]. The quality of a child's life depends on everyday decisions made in households, communities, and in the halls of government...As children go, so go nations^[4].

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The UN adopted treaty called the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) established standards for lives of children including-protection from violence, abuse and abduction, protection from hazardous employment and exploitation, adequate nutrition, free compulsory primary education, adequate health care, equal treatment regardless of gender, race or cultural background [4]. Beijing declaration and platform for action, 1995, addressed the trend known as 'feminization of poverty' [4]. The platform sought to- review, adopt, and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies to address the needs and efforts of poor women; revise laws and administrative practices in order to ensure women's equal rights and access to economic resources; provide women with access to savings and credit mechanisms and institutions; develop gender based methodologies and conduct research to address the feminization of poverty [4]. To address the needs and challenges of poor women and children, UN has framed the millennium development goals, that include-achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health [4]. The supply factors identified by ILO in child trafficking are of high importance to eradicate child poverty [4]. The economic benefits in eliminating child labor in 2000-20 stands to the tune of 4,132.5 US billion dollars [4]. Children forced into prostitution and pornography stands to 1800 thousands across the globe [4].

3. Methodology and Discussion

- a) Government contribution to central government employee's provident fund to be dis-continued to convert provident fund accounts into public provident fund accounts. And the same amount to be utilized for below poverty line pupil.
- b) ISKCON to engage NGOs to help provide food to below poverty line families.
- c) Film industry to do tax exempted donations to below poverty line families.
- d) CSR-Corporate Social Responsibility in meeting the needs of below poverty line families.
- e) Political representation
- f) Education opportunity creation
- g) Transport facility to BPL population
- h) Technology to masses - Pro poor housing schemes.

For every one lakh population, the number of government employees is 139 [5]. The BPL - below poverty line population is 21.9 percent and the rural and urban BPL earnings are 20 and 25 rupees a day respectively [6]. Thus, every one lakh population has 21900 BPL population. Taking a count of five in each family, the BPL families are 4380. Assuming three kids in each BPL family, BPL children are 13140. Thus, 13680 public provident fund accounts to be opened and monitored with a minimum one time contribution of one lakh each. This amount to be generated by dis-continuing government contributions to provident funds of central government employees. Thus, these provident fund accounts to be continued as public provident fund accounts with employee contributions only. The total government expenditure of Pay and allowances in 2017-18 financial year amounted to 194591.98 crores [7]. The total government contribution to provident fund is 12 percent of it, amounting to 23351.038 crores. Thus, the amount exceeds the required amount. The dis-continuation

of government contribution to provident fund accounts of its employees would be a caution sign to Indians on the prevalent social evil, Dowry. The culprit could be caught by a software program matching the bank transactions of a threshold amount on the calendar days of wedding muhurat and cross-checked with marriage registration dates. This could be done form the day banks were computerized.

A wealthy Hindu religious organization, ISKCON-International Society for KRISHNA Consciousness [8], collects donations worldwide to spread Krishna Consciousness. The organization is head quartered in Los Angeles, California, USA. ISKCON is in the business of publishing and selling religious books to spread the devotion of Shri Krishna, the Paripurna avatar of Lord Vishnu. The cost of publishing and distributing books could be nullified with online audio books. The devotees could find peace with a relaxed listening to the religious audio. This money saved could be spent to feed the BPL family. Also, the difference in currency strengths of USA to India is an added advantage to the program of lending alms to the poor. Also, the BPL population could eradicate its Karma by turning devotees to Shri Krishna. Thus, the program of feeding the poor gives ISKCON an opportunity for wider spread of Krishna bhakti, at a reduced cost. The organization could also air its religious preachings on FM radios to further aid the earnings in the welfare of the poor. After all, God belongs to every living creature.

Each film in India earns hundreds of crores at the box office. Each film production company pays a huge amount of tax on its film revenues. Thus, a film production company could contract with a NGO for the welfare of BPL families. These families could be donated food, clothing and shelter to improve their living standards. This would increase the goodwill of a film hero like Salman Khan and his NGO Being Human [9]. Usually, a single film of the hero earns enough revenue to cover the daily living expenditure of the entire BPL population. Thus, film industry would be helpful to double the income of BPL population. Thus, film industry has a significant role to play in societal development.

Corporate Social Responsibility needs a corporate organization to spend two percent of its annual revenue for a social cause. Thus, a CSR would fund enough to raise the living standards of BPL population. To give technology to the poor must be a CSR tactic whereby, BPL population is distributed with non-android mobile phones, each family each phone. However, the distribution generates an additional revenue to the mobile service provider in the form of annual minimum recharges allowing mostly incoming calls. Also, it would allow a greater technology vigilance on the 21.9 percent BPL population. The BPL population could be counselled by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on various social issues like family planning and education, and their inclusion. BPL women representatives nominated to the respective state legislative councils, brings in a radical change in the lives of BPL people. However, a BPL Counsel could spend his earnings on the welfare of his community. The member representative brings a new ray of hope into the lives of BPL population.

All government schools to have classes up to twelfth grade instead of tenth grade. The school children to be given a bit of freedom till they pass out from the school. This reduces school drop-out ratio apart from allowing the kid not to lose an academic year. University education system has to create

avenues for BPL kids. The taxes paid by the university to be put back into the university for the welfare of a BPL student. A BPL student to be completely funded- program fee, hostel fee and mess fee, from the tax revenues of a university. Thus, tax revenues spent on a BPL student to be counted in the annual government expenditure on education.

Government transport sector to facilitate free transport upon producing BPL card. Indian railways should increase number of general bogies to facilitate BPL passengers. In fact, a train should be either air-conditioned or non-AC. The passenger trains to be clubbed to express trains after checking the suspension systems for an increase in speed. The air-conditioned trains would see Indian railways into profits. However, the cost of 21.9 percent BPL passenger fare to be recovered from reduced passenger subsidy. The subsidy on passenger AC ticket fare to be removed and sleeper class subsidy would be only upon a minimum journey of twelve hours. Because, passengers habituated to household Air-conditioner, opt train journey in AC. Since, household ACs don't have any subsidy in monthly electricity bill paid, such passengers could afford occasional non-subsidized journeys in a 3-tier AC train. Thus, passenger trains clubbed into express trains paves way for faster journeys apart from better track utilization. Thus, the entire railway timetable to be re-planned and this needs the help of computers. A specialized algorithm is needed to optimize railway timetable.

Pro-poor housing schemes, integrating technology into BPL apartments. For example, a solar integrated building provides enough solar hot water and solar electricity that zero additional monthly living expenditure is incurred to BPL families.

4. Conclusion

No matter the financial situation of a family, the kid must be raised to fulfill its dreams. And it's a prime responsibility of any government to aid fulfillment of such dreams. An individual should achieve great heights whatsoever might be the path of life. Such an individual contributes to the national growth. Thus, any of the citizens' progress is the progress of the entire country. The PPF accounts monitored for 15 year time period gives enough funds to support a BPL adult in achieving his dreams, be it entrepreneurship or any financial accomplishment. The upliftment of poor and the downtrodden is an ever-continuing process subject to revisions every thirty years. Thus, increased earning potential of BPL population may add additional load on the BPL demarcation. The paper also believes that the methodology adopted raises a strong commitment in every individual towards his fellow citizen and the society. Thus, successful people do things differently instead of different things.

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